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C O N F I D E N T I A L MAPUTO 001137

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [MZ](#) [RENAMO](#)

SUBJECT: MOZAMBIQUE - RENAMO OFFICERS THREATEN TO "RETURN TO THE BUSH" OVER MILITARY RETIREMENTS

REF: A. DAO MAPUTO IIR 6 866 0042 05 271209ZJUN05

[1](#)B. DAO MAPUTO IIR 6 866 0055 05 300922ZAUG05

Classified By: Ambassador Helen La Lime, for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) The Ambassador, along with other heads of missions, was called to a meeting at the Ministry of Foreign on August 30 to hear the government rebut claims made recently a RENAMO leader that former RENAMO officers are being forced to retire unfairly from the Mozambican armed forces. Former senior RENAMO general Herminio Morais, at a press conference RENAMO called on August 25, had charged that the government had unfairly dismissed 25 former RENAMO officers serving in the Mozambican armed forces -- one colonel, six majors and 18 captains. Morais threatened that unless the government took steps to rectify the situation "in the next 30 days," ex-RENAMO fighters would take weapons (Morais said "Ak-47's, pistols and hand grenades") and return to their former military base in Meringue, Sofala province.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Speaking to the Ambassador and other diplomats, Deputy Foreign Minister Banze (most recently Deputy Minister of Defense in the Chissano government), clearly concerned to set the record straight with the international community, laid out the rationale for the retirement of army officers. He said that the retirements referred to by RENAMO's Morais were entirely regular and in keeping with ongoing reform in the military in terms of the army's mission, its access to funds, structure and training needs. Fundamentally, retirement was based on length of service and carried out regardless of whether an officer had formerly been with RENAMO or FRELIMO forces. Per Banze, a professional military should act according to three principles: respect for law; the military must not be a political instrument; and there must be no partisanship in the ranks.

[1](#)3. (U) Under the 1992 Rome Peace Agreement both soldiers from RENAMO (20,000 fighters) and Mozambican government units (60,000) were to be demobilized and then reconstituted into the new Mozambican army on an equal basis. The new armed forces would number 30,000 personnel. In fact, since the end of demobilization in 1994 the number of men and women in the armed forces has remained relatively constant at approximately 10-11,000 soldiers. (Comment: We do not have figures on the exact number of ex-RENAMO officers in the army at present, but believe that they are a distinct minority. RENAMO's officers and rank and file were generally considered less well-trained than FRELIMO's, which may partly explain RENAMO's lower representation in the officer ranks of the reformed army. End comment.)

[1](#)4. (U) RENAMO's threat of returning to war has been roundly criticized in the media (admittedly in the pro-government media) by prominent Mozambican personalities. Abdul Sau, a leading figure in the Islamic Council of Mozambique, said that RENAMO's belligerence signifies that the party has not been able to transform itself from a guerrilla movement into a viable political force 13 years after the war ended. The government paper, Noticias, carried interviews on August 30 with heads of the other political parties. In every instance the politicians attacked RENAMO for its "irresponsible" statements and most added the obvious, that Mozambicans had no wish to resume fighting. A senior Catholic church official in Maputo, in a somewhat more conciliatory tone, downplayed the threats as merely an "expression of force" rather than a real desire to return to war.

[1](#)5. (C) Comment: Over the past several months RENAMO officials, including RENAMO president Dhlakama, have issued statements accusing the government of "marginalizing" ex-RENAMO officers in the military. We have been unable to substantiate these claims (Ref A). However, given President Guebuza's past as the FRELIMO political commissar in the army during the early years of the 1976-1992 civil war, we would not be surprised if the army now has a more partisan tinge, Deputy FM Banze's statements notwithstanding.

[1](#)6. (C) Comment Continued: We view the ex-RENAMO general's threat that former soldiers will take up arms and return to their old base at Meringue as grandstanding and a fantasy. Morais' remarks are the first we have heard by any RENAMO leader in favor of such a drastic step. Nonetheless we will watch developments closely.

La Lime